

Strengths and Obstacles Related to Mobilizing Community Businesses: Qualitative Analysis of Interviews with Employees of Comprehensive Community Support Centers

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Abstract This study uses the strengths perspective (Saleebey, 2005) to clarify the strengths and obstacles encountered by Comprehensive Community Support Centers (CCSCs) in mobilizing community businesses. A qualitative study was conducted using semi-structured interviews with 20 employees in nine CCSCs in A city. The subjects were interviewed on the basis of the strengths and obstacles they encountered while mobilizing community businesses in an effort to motivate them to join a project to assist the elderly. Data were analyzed according to two systems such as the community businesses and district systems.

Findings indicate that the number and type of registered community businesses and the activities of CCSCs are more heavily influenced by their location and qualifications of the employees than their parent corporations. Community businesses joined the project because of their attachment to their district, awareness of their elderly customers, desire to improve their image, and other considerations. Cooperation from local organizations also encouraged their participation.

However, some community businesses stated their inability to participate in the community activity. Another obstacle in developing and mobilizing community businesses was the decline in the number of small community-based shops that could take charge of the informal supporters in their districts.

Key words: Comprehensive Community Support Centers (CCSCs), strength, obstacle, qualitative study, resources, generalist social work

I. Introduction

1. Background

This study uses the Strengths Perspective (Saleebey, 2005) to clarify the strengths and obstacles of Comprehensive Community Support Center (CCSC), which is a social care agency that assists the elderly and their families in districts, to mobilize community businesses.

Currently, necessary measures to prevent a solitary death among the elderly are being taken

into consideration. To this end, current efforts are emphasizing the establishment of support systems for reporting and responding to the elderly or other vulnerable individuals when they meet with accidents or face distressing life situations (Committee for Discussing Safety Lives Programs, 2012; Japan National Council of Social Welfare, 2012).

In addition, CCSCs are expected to work with various community resources to establish support systems for those who may need spontaneous help (Iwama, 2008; Lee, 2012; Nonaka, 2013; Takase, 2012). Since its establishment in 2006, CCSCs have played various roles; 1) care management, 2) general consultation 3) advocacy, 4) integrating various community resources,

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and so on. Recent empirical studies have clarified their intervention process with neighborhood associations, district welfare commissioners, and residents (All Japan Federation of Municipal Health Centers, 2008; Hishinuma, 2012; Japan National Council of Social Welfare, 2011; Japanese Association of Certified Social Workers, 2009, 2012; Kobayashi, 2011; Naka, 2012). With the exception of a few studies, however, little attention has been paid to interventions involving community businesses. Community businesses are usually small- to medium sized for profit entities. Such entities include grocery stores, beauty salons, and local banks. Sawato (2013) examines community businesses as one component in the Ohta Network for Watching over and Supporting the Elderly, primarily regarding the process of conducting the seminars that led to the development of the network. Therefore, this study does not provide sufficient information concerning how interventions involving individual community businesses should be conducted. Toyonaka-city Council of Social Welfare (2012) did not conduct any detailed analysis of their operations.

There are three advantages CCSCs establishing collaborative relationships with community businesses. First, even though clients often refuse “professional” care agencies, they seem more open to accessing community businesses. Second, community businesses that are in operation for a long time know their customers well. Small shops are more likely to notice any unusual conditions. Third, they understand the conditions that the elderly face based on the scope of their work. For example, banks and credit associations may take notice that an elderly individual is suffering from senile dementia when he/she is unable to conduct any arrangements.

It is important for CCSCs to work with community businesses to prevent such vulnerable individuals from becoming isolated within the community.

2. Purpose

The purpose of this study is to clarify the strengths and obstacles that certified social workers and other CCSC professionals identify in the process of mobilizing community businesses, from the Strengths Perspective.

Iwama (2008) argues the functions of CCSCs as Generalist Social Work, including the Strengths Perspective. He asserts that their support function should mobilize local residents and organizations to ascertain safety of elderly individuals.

The Strengths Perspective focuses on the strengths of clients and their environments. Fast and Chapin (2000) describe the principles that the community is full of resources and that the primary task of care managers is to find and rejuvenate existing resources. Previous studies (Chapin, 2011; Long *et al.*, 2006; Rapp and Goscha, 2012) clarify the process of acquiring environmental resources, focusing on schools, police stations and churches. However, these studies do not regard community businesses as resources. The identification of ways in which certified social workers in CCSCs could mobilize community businesses as new pivotal community resources might therefore allow the consideration of Japanese-style social work in comprehensive community care from the Strengths Perspective.

II. Method and Subjects

1. A-city Network for Watching Over and Supporting the Elderly (A-city Network) Project

Previous studies have failed to consider ways in which community businesses can be mobilized within the context of social work. Exploratory and qualitative methods are therefore appropriate for examining this issue. In a qualitative study, selecting a relevant sample is important (Denzin and Lincoln, 2000). Accordingly, we select A city, which administrated the “A-city Network for Watching Over and Supporting the Elderly (A-city Network) Project.”

2. Research site

Located in X Prefecture, A city is one of the suburbs in Kanto area. As of April 2013, the population is approximately 176,000, with the elderly comprising 21.2%. According to the Committee for Promoting Community Care (2011) established by the X Prefecture, A city is considered to be average with regard to the proportion of primary industries, the number of small shops per 100,000 residents, the proportion of households consisting of residents living alone and elderly couples, and the proportion of detached houses and public apartment houses.

Regarding environmental conditions, A city has several train stations that enable commuters to go to their offices in the heart of the prefecture easily. Although many factories and their company houses were previously located here, such businesses have been closing during the past decade. In recent years, many apartment houses have been built near stations, and the number of large-scale shopping centers has been increasing accordingly. The number of the elderly residents dying alone has also been increasing.

3. Aims of the A-city Network Project

The project, "A-city Network," aims to encourage CCSCs, residents, and community businesses to identify the accidents and distressing life situations experienced by the elderly and take immediate measures.

The project consists of three sub-projects. First, to establish a list of registered community businesses, who agree to care for the elderly with whom they are in contact. The CCSCs ask community businesses frequented by the elderly to join this network. If they notice unusual behavior portrayed by an elderly individual, they report his/her case to the CCSCs. Second, volunteer residents in charge of watching-over elderly individuals in the community and notifying a CCSC about potential clients. Third is a safeguarding system comprising various kinds of public agencies.

The focus of the first sub-project in this study is on identifying ways of mobilizing community

businesses. As explained in the project brochure (A city, 2011), the objective is to encourage community businesses to identify accidents involving the elderly in the course of regular business operations and to report such accidents to CCSCs. In the brochure, the owner of a fish shop is used as an illustrative example of registered community businesses.

The project is an innovative attempt to redevelop potential resources within the community. This is why we selected the CCSCs in A city as the subject of this study.

4. Subjects of the research

The research subjects comprised 20 employees of nine CCSCs in A city. Table 1 provides details of information about nine CCSCs.

We interviewed certified social workers to analyze the A city project from the Strengths Perspective. In case the CCSC certified social workers had worked for only a short while and/or were not part of the project, we interviewed other CCSC professionals. Characteristics of the interviewees are presented in Table 2. Certified social workers, especially older ones, often mention their cooperation with local organizations. Generally, the number and type of registered community businesses and the activities of CCSCs are more heavily influenced by their location and number of employees than they are by their parent corporations.

5. Data collection

First, we conducted semi-structured interviews with certified social workers and other employees of nine CCSCs from September to November 2011 to gather their basic information such as the number of employees at the CCSC, the projects they are in charge of, the characteristics of the district in which they work, and the needs of clients with whom they intervene intensively as well as the intervention process.

Moreover, a second round of semi-structured interviews was conducted from September to November 2012 to clarify the interviewees' process of interventions with registered community

Table 1 Characteristics of Comprehensive Community Support Centers in A city

	A	B	C	D	E	F	G	H	I
Parent corporation	Medical corporation (Same as the one managing CCSC E)	Social welfare corporation	Medical corporation (Same as the one managing CCSC G)	Social welfare corporation	Medical corporation (Same as the one managing CCSC A)	Medical corporation	Medical corporation (Same as the one managing CCSC C)	Medical corporation	Social welfare corporation
Occupations of employees*	CSW 1 CCM 1 Nurse 1 Clerk 1	CSW 1 CM 1 PHN 1 CM 1	CSW 1 CCM 1 Nurse 1	CSW 3 CCM 1 Nurse 1 CM 1	CSW 1 CCM 1 Nurse 1 CM 1	CSW 1 CCM 1 Nurse 1	CSW 2 CCM 1 Nurse 1 CM 1	CSW 1 CCM 1 Nurse 1 CM 1	CSW 1 CCM 1 PHN 1 CM 1
Characteristics recognized by interviewees	Old residential districts Newly developing residential districts	Newly developing districts	Inconvenient transportation Depopulated districts	Large-scale public housings Shopping districts	Detached houses Shopping districts Inconvenient transportation in some districts	Farmlands Public houses Newly developing residential districts	Old residential districts Newly developing districts Shopping districts near the station	Barriers due to hills Company houses Public houses Shopping districts	Barriers due to hills Old residential districts Farmlands
Number of registered community businesses	30	18	23	113	22	10	53	20	52
Types of registered community businesses (>2)	Small shops Building firms Post offices Beauty salons Newspaper stores Clinics Drug stores	Clinics Beauty salons and barbers Massage clinics Post offices	Small shops Convenience stores Restaurants Dental clinics Massage clinics	Small shops Convenience Stores Drug stores Beauty salons Restaurants Clinics Dental clinics	Small shops Beauty salons Barbers Drug stores Massage clinics Newspaper stores	Beauty salons Building firms Clinics Post offices	Small shops Dental clinics Beauty salons Real estate agents Clinics Drug stores Convenience stores	Beauty salons Super markets Banks Massage clinics	Drug stores Clinics Dental clinics Beauty salons Small shops Restaurants Real estate agents

* CSW: certified social worker, CM: care manager, CCM: chief care manager, PHN: public health nurse

Table 2 Characteristics of Subjects

No	Sex	Age	Qualifications of each subject
1	Male	30s	Certified social worker
2	Female	50s	Nurse, Chief care manager
3	Male	20s	Certified social worker, Care manager
4	Female	50s	Certified care worker, Chief care manager
5	Female	30s	Certified social worker
6	Female	30s	Certified social worker, Certified care worker
7	Male	30s	Certified care worker, Chief care manager
8	Female	40s	Certified social worker, Care manager
9	Male	50s	Certified social worker, Chief care manager
10	Female	30s	Certified social worker
11	Female	50s	Certified care worker, Care manager
12	Female	40s	Certified social worker
13	Female	50s	Nurse
14	Male	40s	Certified social worker, Care manager
15	Female	50s	Nurse
16	Female	40s	Certified social worker, Certified psychiatric social worker, Care manager
17	Female	20s	Certified social worker
18	Female	30s	Certified social worker, Care manager
19	Female	40s	Certified social worker, Chief care manager
20	Female	40s	Certified social worker, Certified care worker, Care manager

businesses. Questions comprised 1) the number and types of community businesses that join the project, 2) reasons for joining the project, 3) ways in which interviewees develop and mobilize them, 4) strengths (*tsuyomi*) that encourage registered community businesses to join the project, and 5) obstacles that prevent them from fulfilling their roles. In the second round of interviews, we interviewed them, referring to the list that each CCSC had compiled.

Previous studies defined strengths as consisting of various factors, including competence, resilience and resources (Rapp and Goscha, 2012; Saleebey, 2005). However, “strengths” have not been sufficiently recognized by Japanese social workers and other care professionals. Therefore, we asked the interviewees to talk freely about the strengths they recognized when they mobilized registered community businesses.

The length of the interviews ranged from 35 to 120 minutes, for a total of 18 hours and 32 minutes. Every interview was recorded on an IC

recorder, after the interviewee’s informed consent.

Finally, on November 16, 2012, we interviewed the section chief, subsection chief, and the head of the project to gather information concerning its process and background. In addition, on February 3, 2013, a lecture was presented by the chairperson, a professor of community welfare, of the committee that had reviewed the project. Also, we reviewed seventeen proceedings of the meetings held by the preparatory committees for designing the project and the steering committees, the report (A city, 2006), the brochure (A city, 2011) and newsletters of this project.

This study clarifies the strengths and obstacles that interviewees recognized. How they deal with such strengths and obstacles will be analyzed in future.

6. Method of analysis

As the data analysis framework, the authors of

this study developed four code systems on the basis of previous studies on Generalist Social Work (Chetkow-Yanov, 1997; Miley *et al.*, 2012; Ohta, 1992; Sato, 2001): 1) community business, 2) district, 3) municipality, and 4) prefecture and the countrywide system. Because of space limitations, this study will focus on the community businesses system and the district system.

MAXQDA10, the qualitative data analysis software package, was used on the basis of Sato (2006, 2008). Analysis of the data proceeded as follows: 1) The first interviewee's transcript was coded, considering the meaning. 2) The next interviewee's transcript was coded in comparison with the interview data (segment) of first interviewee's transcript, paying attention to similarities and differences between the two transcripts. 3) These analytic steps were repeated to confirm possible interpretation of each concept, focusing on the characteristics of interviewees and their CCSCs. 4) Finally, the concepts were classified into the four systems mentioned above, paying attention to similarities and differences in each concept.

To analyze the data validly, research members, including certified social workers, engaged in the discussion, referencing the project records and reports. Finally, several concepts have been modified based on comments from the interviewees.

7. Ethical considerations

The authors informed the interviewees about the study's purpose, protection of privacy, and use of the data for conference presentations and articles. The interviewees consented to participate and be recorded during the interviews. Data were modified and omitted to protect their privacy to the extent that it did not hinder the analysis.

III. Results

1. Characteristics of registered community businesses

As of November 2012, there were 348 registered community businesses in A city. The types and number of were as follows: 1) small shops:

61 (17.5%); 2) beauty salons and barbers: 49 (14.1%); 3) dental clinics: 33 (9.5%); 4) drug stores: 30 (8.6%); 5) clinics: 29 (8.3%); 6) restaurants: 20 (5.7%); 7) convenience stores: 19 (5.5%); 8) massage clinics: 18 (5.2%); 9) building firms: 17 (4.6%); 10) post offices: 15 (4.3%); 11) credit associations, banks and other financial institutions 10 (2.9%); 12) real estate agents: 10 (2.9%); and 13) newspaper shops: 7 (2.0%). Other types of businesses consist of supermarkets, taxi companies, laundries, etc. In this study, we primarily discuss strengths and obstacles encountered when mobilizing community businesses, with the exception of medical clinics. The number and types of registered community businesses covered by each CCSC are listed in Table 1.

2. Strengths that CCSCs recognize

Table 3 shows the concepts and examples of interviews. The concepts are shown in **bold**.

2.1. Community business system

Attachment to the local community

Understanding the reasons why community businesses participate in the project is advantageous toward developing community resources. Upon analyzing the transcript, we noticed the theme of "senses of ties with customers and/or communities". We used this theme to create the concept of **attachment to the local community**.

Many interviewees reported that businesses who conduct their business in the district for many years had become registered community businesses. Small shop owners often consider themselves as members of the community, and this sense of membership encourages them to play a role in the support system.

Awareness of their elderly customers

As noted by some interviewees, certain community businesses who demonstrated **attachment to the local community** had already attempted to aid elderly customers even before the CCSC workers requested them to take up this role; some beauty salon owners helped their elderly customers with senile dementia to their homes, and some small shops delivered parcels

Table 3 Systems, concepts, definitions, and examples of interviews of strengths that interviewees develop and mobile community businesses

Systems	Concepts	Definitions	Examples of Interviews
Community business	Attachment to the local community	Senses of ties with customers and/or communities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • They (shop owners) would like to work together, rather than make profit. • They (shop owners) think that their activities might contribute to the district. • He (a shop owner) has managed his small shop for a long time and has established strong ties with his customers.
	Awareness of their elderly customers	Community businesses had already attempted to aid elderly customers even before the CCSC workers requested them to take up this role.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The meat shop owner delivered a small quantity of meat to an elderly customer who could not visit the shop because she had weak legs. She lives alone in this housing complex. • In a beauty salon in that apartment complex, whose customers were aging, the owners or employees would take their elderly customers from the salon back to their rooms. They often noticed changes in their customers and frequently report accidents and illnesses to us. • X credit association, which might have experienced problems involving elderly people with senile dementia, was planning to have the employees in all of their branches participate in a training session concerning elderly people with senile dementia (<i>ninchisyo-supporter</i>). They asked us (A-city association of certified social workers) to provide these training sessions. • Middle-aged and elderly shop owners, who looked after their parents, tend to be more involved in this project.
	Desire to improve their image	Community businesses want to get good reputation in the district.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Having their names on the list of registered community businesses may be regarded as a friendly shop for the elderly. • They put the label distributed by A city at the entrance to improve their image among the elderly.
	Greater Discretion left to community businesses' managers	The owners and/or managers can decide whether to join the project.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • It is easier to explain small stores managed by their family rather than large-scale supermarkets. • Regarding convenience store chains, some shop masters undertook it, other shop masters did not. • Despite this shop being one of the franchisees, it was owned by a person who lived in this district; therefore, he independently took the decision to join.
District	Cooperation from local organizations	Local organizations decide to work with CCSCs and join the project.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The number of registered community businesses increased some years ago. The Chamber of Commerce and Industry suggested all members to join. • The barber's guild asked us to explain the project. • The shopping district association was aware of decreasing customers. Therefore, they wanted to work with us (CCSCs).

*Names of the interviewees, names of the center, sex, age, the qualification, and the date of interview are omitted to protect the privacy of interviewees.

to the homes of elderly customers without charge. Furthermore, some other shop owners register with the project citing personal experience with difficulties in caring for elderly relatives. We used this theme to create the concept of **awareness of their elderly customers**.

Large-scale businesses also mentioned the needs of their elderly customers with senile dementia and discussed ways of addressing these issues systematically. According to several interviewees, some of the credit associations have decided that every branch office should join the project and that all employees should be trained as supporters for elderly people with senile dementia (*ninchisyo-supporter*).

Some community businesses were requested to register this role with CCSCs and they agreed to it immediately, as they consulted CCSCs for advice.

Desire to improve their image

The two previously described concepts are strengths related to community businesses' goodwill to contribute to the district. **Desire to improve their image** is another strength that seems marginally different. Registering for the role of a registered community business presents a good reputation in the district.

Some of the interviewees regarded "the labels showing registered community businesses" and "the list of registered community businesses" as ways of indicating that those enterprises have been recognized as a "friendly shops," counting such indicators among the strengths of the project.

Greater discretion left to community businesses' managers

Even though community businesses have the abovementioned strengths, their decision to join the A city project is influenced by the discretion of each community business' manager. In smaller stores, the owners can decide whether to join the project.

On the other hand, franchise retail organizations need to apply for their headquarters' approval. Several interviewees emphasized the "extent to which managers of franchise can make

decisions without obtaining approval from their headquarters." For example, the managers of some chains of franchise convenience stores were able to join the project on their own, while the managers of other chains needed permission from their headquarters.

2.2. District system

Cooperation from local organizations

Senior certified social workers in CCSCs that were located in shopping districts mentioned collaborating with the shopping district associations.

"The shopping district association was aware of the decreasing number of customers. They were therefore willing to cooperate with the municipality's project." (certified social worker)

A large shopping mall will be constructed in this area. Officials in the shopping district association are developing various strategies for coping with this situation. One of these strategies involves joining the project. Another senior certified social worker mentioned cooperation from the Chamber of Commerce and Industry. In contrast, employees from CCSCs in depopulated areas identified "occupational guilds" and "neighborhoods association" as strengths.

The interviews clarified that community business' decision to join the project is strongly influenced by this strength. Generally, if local organizations decide to join the project, the number of registered community businesses will rapidly increase. Furthermore, their ties with CCSCs will become closer.

3. Obstacles

Table 4 shows the concepts and examples of interviews.

3.1. Community business system

Apprehension about potential leakage of customer's information

One of the obstacles to their participation is that the community businesses hesitate to provide private information about their customers to the CCSCs and the municipality.

According to some interviewees, small shop owners consider such behavior as "betrayal" toward their customers. Large-scale community

Table 4 Systems, concepts, definitions, and examples of interviews of obstacles that interviewees develop and mobile community businesses

Systems	Concepts	Definitions	Examples of Interviews
Community business	Apprehension about potential leakage of customer's information	Community businesses hesitate to provide private information about their customers to the CCSCs and the municipality	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • We often hear that reporting (customers to the CCSCs) is the same as squeal or passing on information of customer's privacy, or betrayal. • Banks are under an obligation to keep secret. • They (shop owners) hesitate to violate customer's privacy.
	Feelings of being victimized by elderly customers	Community businesses harbor negative feelings about elderly customers and CCSCs	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Shoplifting among the elderly has been increasing; therefore, shop owners dislike elderly customers. • Some customers consume alcohol and litter the area, thus annoying convenience store owners. • When questioned, a shop owner got angry that A city had not dealt with the many elderly individuals who caused troubles saying that it was "too late."
	Confrontations between CCSCs and community businesses	Community businesses harbor strong feelings of hostility toward CCSCs	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • An elderly woman suffering from senile dementia subscribed to a newspaper for a term of three years at a newspaper store. For the store, it is purely sales and there is no malice. • Sometimes, we apply for cancelation of the contract. • Their (store's) contact had been canceled by the council of social welfare; therefore, they held hostile feelings against us.
	No time and no attention	Community businesses are too busy to be concerned about their larger community	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • These shop owners/managers are too busy to meet. • They (shop owners) hesitated to join the program, as they thought that they would be busy attending a meeting or writing reports. • We hesitate whether we should ask registered community businesses to attend our meeting because they will need to close their shops. • Many part-time workers are employed. They do not know this project.
District	Few community businesses in developing districts	Some districts have few community businesses to aid the elderly	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • No station stands in this district; thus, there is no shopping district. • We would like to increase the number of registered community businesses here; however, there are a lot of fields and only few houses and shops.
	Decrease in community businesses	Community businesses in the district quit their jobs	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Some convenience stores were shut. • The owner in this shop is so old, he will no longer be able to manage it. • It was unprofitable to run a single beauty parlor. • Some supermarket opened, so many small shops were shut.

* Names of the interviewees, names of the center, sex, age, the qualification, and the date of interview are omitted to protect the privacy of interviewees.

businesses are controlled by their own rules formulated by their headquarters.

Feelings of being victimized by elderly customers

Although **apprehension about potential leakage of customer's information** can be interpreted as an obstacle, it suggests that community businesses care about their customers. Analysis of the data revealed that some community businesses harbored negative feelings about elderly customers, as illustrated by the following interview.

"One convenience store owner said, 'I hated dirty elderly customers, drinking in my stores. Then you did not help me. Now you ask me to cooperate. It's unfair!'" (certified social worker)

Other shops experienced shoplifting incidents and other kinds of nuisances committed by the elderly or the handicapped. In addition, some of them expressed anger at the municipality and CCSCs for not dealing appropriately with such problems.

Confrontations between CCSCs and community businesses

Some community businesses expressed **feelings of being victimized by elderly customers**, and they regarded CCSCs as "useless" agencies. The interviews revealed that some businesses harbored strong feelings of hostility toward them.

A certified social worker described "a case in which an elderly woman with senile dementia subscribed for a newspaper for a long-term." She negotiated with the newspaper shops on the woman's behalf to cancel it. However, the shop refused to become a registered community business.

We gathered similar information from interviews with senior certified social workers, but not from junior certified social workers, care managers, or nurses. The longer certified social workers had worked in the CCSCs, the more frequently they had needed to intervene with community businesses to advocate for their clients. These interviews suggested that their aggressive intervention would cause further damage to their

relationships.

No time and no attention

The three previous concepts can be interpreted as "concerns about elderly customers," even though some of these concerns are negative. Several interviewees noted that many community businesses are too busy to be concerned about their community under the recent economic downturn and severe social conditions.

"When I visit them to request their participation, many managers often go to headquarters and banks. I am not able to do this." (care manager)

"Many stores employ part-time employees instead of full-time employees. These employees do not pay attention to the elderly." (certified social worker)

Even though the shop managers decide to join the project, it is difficult for them to maintain active contact with the CCSCs and to attend training.

3.2. District system

Few community businesses in developing districts

Some districts of A city comprise fields and hills. These districts have few community businesses.

"No station stands in this district; thus, there is no shopping district here." (care manager)

Therefore, it is difficult for CCSCs in these developing districts to increase the number of registered community businesses.

Decrease in community businesses

In other districts, it is difficult to find registered community businesses because of a general decrease in the number of businesses. Especially, small shops which previously conducted businesses in the district closed because of the increasing competition with large-scale retail stores or shop owners' aging.

IV. Discussion

1. Community business as resources and social work of CCSCs

This study reveals that community businesses,

particularly those who are self-employed and based in the community, are potential community resources through which certified social workers could carry out interventions. In this project, small shops and beauty salons comprised more than 30% of all registered community businesses. Many interviewees described instances when they had assisted elderly residents. Some of them voluntarily provide assistance to their vulnerable customers. In this regard, the project presents an opportunity for CCSCs to become aware of community businesses as resources.

Moreover, this project encouraged CCSCs to be aggressive in developing community resources. One of the most important outcomes of this project involves the fact that the municipality entrusted the role of developing community resources to the CCSCs.

In the past, social workers did not pay attention to community businesses as resources in the district. This project encourages them to build relationships with community businesses. Certified social workers and other care professionals in the CCSCs in A city visited them individually, thereby enabling small shops to join the project.

2. Conflicts of interests between community businesses and CCSCs

This study clarifies that community businesses sometimes join the project because they wish to increase their own benefit. Notably, these motivations are not obstacles for social workers to develop and mobilize community resources. Rapp and Goscha (2012: 181) state that people often want to help others due to their self-interests, such as financial, social, and religious reasons. In addition, they emphasize that the advantages or rewards to participate is a cognitive principle of the technique of persuasion for resources (Rapp and Goscha, 2012: 209). Therefore, as long as community businesses' self-interests encourage them to support vulnerable people, these self-interests can be considered as strengths.

However, some self-interests cause conflicts between community businesses' and CCSCs. The

biggest conflict is that their self-interests disturb the lives of vulnerable people. For example, some interviewees stated that community businesses who had their contracts with the elderly canceled by CCSCs refused to join the project.

In general, cooperation from local organizations made it possible to increase the number of registered community businesses and to reinforce their ties with CCSCs. In some cases, however, they harbored hostile attitudes toward the project and did not cooperate with CCSCs even when the local organization forced them to register.

Kobayashi (2011) highlights that residents can identify life situations of the elderly and inform the municipality and social work agencies about them. As an example, he describes one cause in which a grocer notices that an elderly customer bought food regularly and told a CCSC about her. He defines two types of motivations behind reporting accidents and situations involving the elderly and vulnerable people to the municipality and social work agencies: 1) consideration and apprehension for other residents and 2) preventing loss of benefits. Also, he highlights that it is difficult for community businesses and residents to offer continuous support to vulnerable people.

Community businesses choose to support their district on the basis of their own motivations. However, when their interests are contrary to those of social work agencies, they may decline to collaborate.

3. Differences in districts and their factors

As shown in Table 1, there were fewer registered community businesses in developing districts than in other districts. However, it is important to note that the proportion of registered community businesses in these districts is not lower than that of other districts. Analysis of the proportions of registered community businesses in relation with all businesses in each district (Ishida and Yamanoi, 2013) revealed differences among CCSCs in similar districts.

These differences could be due to several factors, including **cooperation from local organizations**. The mobilization of these community

businesses might depend on intervention by CCSCs. Further study is needed regarding social work interventions in general, in addition to other environmental factors.

V. Conclusion and Limitations

This study examined the strengths and obstacles of the community business system and the district system. We coded strengths and obstacles in municipality system, as well as in prefecture and the countrywide system. Many interviewees noted that municipalities often expect community businesses to play many roles in preventing disasters and ensuring security for children, thereby imposing a burden upon them. The information obtained in this study also suggests that the interviewees are attempting to enhance the strengths and overcome obstacles in this regard. Our next mission is to identify their challenges.

Because this study was conducted in a single municipality, the results cannot be generalized to reflect the strengths and obstacles faced by certified social workers in CCSCs as a whole. A thorough examination of social work interventions for mobilizing community resources will require studying CCSCs in different municipalities.

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